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INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 9043
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RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6746
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
THURSDAY, JULY 24, 2008

In Today's Papers

Simultaneous Operations in Five Provinces

All papers give extensive front page coverage to the operations conducted by the Konya anti-terrorism police department in Konya, Istanbul, Mersin, Kocaeli and Elazig, although coverage is mixed and unclear as to whether these operations are directly related to the Ergenekon investigation. Mainstream Sabah headline reads "Green Wave in Ergenekon" and reports that 26 people were detained during the operations in five cities. The director of "National Solution" magazine Ahmet Akgul and "National TV" Mediterranean representative Yusuf Buldu were among the detainees, adds the paper. Mainstream Hurriyet reports that the detainees were charged for attempting to overthrow the government by force, being members of and illegal organization and inciting revolt. Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet quotes Konya Police Chief Tuzcu saying that "the suspects have a common agenda. We are investigating any possible connection between the suspects and Ergenekon."

Turkish History Institution Head Halacoglu Removed from his Post
Sabah, Milliyet, Vatan, Hurriyet, Zaman, Cumhuriyet and others:
Today's papers report that the head of Turkish History Institution, Yusuf Halacoglu, was removed from his position after 15 years. The decree of his removal was published in the Official Gazette yesterday. Mainstream Vatan reminds readers of Halacoglu's controversial remarks on the Armenian issue and says that the decision to remove Halacoglu from his post might be an indication of the new efforts of the government to improve relations with Yerevan. Hurriyet reports that the government will appoint historian Prof. Ali Birinci to Halacoglu's position. Birinci, reportedly, supports dialogue between Turkey and Armenia.

Meanwhile, Islamist-oriented Zaman reports that Turkey and Armenia continue to exchange good will messages. Earlier, Armenian President Sargsyan invited President Gul to Armenia for a soccer match between Turkey and Armenia on September 6. Yesterday, President Gul toured the ruins of the old Armenian city of Ani on the Turkish-Armenian border and gave the message to Armenia that 'it could join in regional projects like Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project, by recognizing the territorial integrity of the regional

countries.' Hurriyet reports that FM Babacan hosted a reception in New York on Tuesday in order to get support for Turkey's participation in UN Security Council. Armenian permanent UN representative Martirosyan was among 118 diplomats who attended the reception.

Parliament Decides that There was Negligence in Dink Murder
Yeni Safak, Zaman, Turkiye, Cumhuriyet, Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal:
All papers report that the parliamentary sub-committee on human rights released its report on the assassination of Hrant Dink. In its 180 page report, the commission said that both the police and the gendarme were negligent in the assassination of Dink.

Anti-Terror High Council decision on US Consulate Attack
Sabah reports that at the monthly Anti-Terror High Council, headed by Deputy PM Cemil Cicek, the members discussed the attack on the US Consulate in Istanbul. They concluded that Al-Qaeda, after receiving a heavy blow during operations in Gaziantep several months ago, retaliated by carrying out the attack on the Consulate. The attackers had ties with Afghanistan and their main target in the Consulate attack was Turkey, not the US.

Meanwhile, Milliyet reports on the testimonies of the attackers who were detained saying that the attack was carried out by an "Irfan Group" who had ties abroad. Reportedly, the Irfan group had ties to the "Irfan Foundation" which operates in a small mosque in Altinsehir, Istanbul.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Serbia/Karadzic

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"Stage Play"

Oktay Eksi wrote in mainstream Hurriyet (7/24): "The capture of Karadzic is nothing more than a stage play. This is not about capturing a war criminal, but it is about a hypocrisy which decided not to protect a criminal figure any longer. Considering the capture of Karadzic a success is either an insult to the human intellect or admitting Serbia does not have any quality to qualify itself as a state. This man was not hiding at all; he was living in the open. The timing of this game is obvious: Karadzic's capture coincided with the EU meeting to discuss Serbian accession to the Union. It will not be surprising also to see now the capture of Mladic. Serbia is just one example of hypocrisy; the Europeans also are hypocritical in this matter. 200,000 people were subject to genocide right before the eyes of Europeans, yet they refrained from accusing Serbia of genocide. Instead the whole thing is deliberately presented as a crime of two figures: Karadzic and Mladic."

"Karadzic's Capture and Milosevic"

Sahin Alpay wrote in Islamist-leaning Zaman (7/24): "There were three main figures responsible for the horrifying Serbian nationalism; Milosevic, Karadzic and Mladic. Following Karadzic's capture, we should expect the capture of Mladic as well. Once this is done, the most significant obstacle in Serbia's efforts to attain EU membership will likely be eliminated. The capture of Karadzic has three important aspects. One of them is the fact that a brutal figure will be held accountable for his crimes against humanity. Secondly, the capture incident shows the strong allure of European Union membership. The EU factor moved the Serbian government to bring Karadzic to justice even though he is considered by some as a national hero. The third important point is the Milosevic factor in the capture. The operation happened with the cooperation of the Interior Ministry which is in the Socialist Party portfolio. Since Milosevic founded the Socialist Party, it would not be wrong to assume that Milosevic staffers helped in the capture of Karadzic."

Iraqi Election Law Vetoed. News outlets report in a straightforward fashion that Iraqi President Jalal Talabani rejected a provincial election law a day after it was adopted by the Iraqi parliament. Papers emphasize the part that Kurdish opinion played in this decision. Mainstream Sabah writes "Kerkuk Boycott from Kurds," saying "the law was boycotted by Kurdish lawmakers."

Islamist-oriented Zaman writes "Kurds are Reactive, Tabani will Veto the New Election Law." Leftist-nationalist Cumhuriyet notes "the law, which the U.S. supports, would allow voting in the country's 18 provinces and the elections are scheduled for latest December 31." Liberal Radikal carries the story under "Iraqi Local Elections Law Stuck at Kurds" headline.

TV Highlights
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- Three people killed and two others injured in a foam party in the southern resort of Antalya
- Environment Minister Veysel Eroglu accused Izmir Mayor Aziz Kocaoglu for hiding from the public the facts about arsenic content in city water
- President Gul will attend the groundbreaking ceremony for Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway project together with the presidents of Azerbaijan and Georgia
- Some private hospitals annul their agreements with the Social Security Institution as they fail to reach agreement on the price of medical services

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- Turkish Bread producers warn that bread prices will increase if the government fails to prevent increase in wheat by November

International News

- A climate change activist attempts to superglue himself to British PM Gordon Brown
 - The European Commission will propose forcing US diplomats to apply for visas to travel to the European Union from January 1, 2009, unless Washington grants all EU citizens with visa-free entry
- WILSON